

March 20, 2000

Mark Conrad, Director, Technology Initiatives
National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC)
National Archives and Records Administration
700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Room 111
Washington, DC 20408-0001

Dear Mr. Conrad,

We wish to submit a draft application for an Electronic Records Grant. We are developing methods and guidelines to help state and local government agencies of any size manage the full life cycle of electronic records. Our efforts fit within your project interests and such a grant would assist us in meeting our goals.

Who we are

This proposal is from an Electronic Records Archive Initiative work group formed by Arizona's Department of Library, Archives and Public Records (DLAPR), Arizona's Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), Arizona's Secretary of State (SoS), Clerk of the Superior Court in Maricopa County (MCCSC), Arizona State University (ASU) and Arizona's Government Information Technology Agency (GITA). We expect that other state agencies, county and university organizations will participate as this initiative proceeds.

Rationale for our initiative

Government agencies are required to manage and provide access to many types of electronic records. These electronic records are created in many formats by many different software tools on many different hardware platforms. The tools and platforms are constantly evolving. This poses three related problems: 1) how to maintain the integrity of the electronic record's content and format as it migrates through the steady evolution of electronic tools and media, 2) how to provide reliable, easy to use tools (standards, best practices, appraisal tools, guidelines, etc.) that allow an agency of any size to cope with this migration with the staff skills at hand, and 3) how to improve the accessibility of the electronic record.

The work group is addressing a set of questions that includes:

- 1) How does an agency (given the rapid obsolescence of hardware, software and record formats):
 - a) Identify and appraise records of unknown type?
 - b) Assess what to migrate (what to keep)?
 - c) Migrate records to new archival electronic forms?
 - d) Track the versions of the archived material as it migrates?
- 2) What are the best practices for migrating records to assure integrity and prepare for unknown future innovation in electronic records media, software and hardware?

- 3) What are the best practices for assuring the ability to readily access the archived electronic records in usable form?
- 4) What are the best practices for assessing on-site conversion or off-site conversion?
- 5) How can agencies maintain the staff resources and skills needed to manage electronic records?

Addressing these questions will aid agencies by providing guidelines and tools that will help them manage, archive and provide access to their electronic records.

Proposed Methodology

- 1) Develop a list of disparate agency electronic records that can be readily sampled.
- 2) Establish an open-standards based mechanism with standards and guidelines for collectively storing and indexing the sample records.
- 3) Establish methods to standardize the various forms of electronic records in common format that maintain the record's integrity while reducing the variations in software.
- 4) Develop practical procedures to convert the sample records to the common formats and index them within the common mechanism.
- 5) Assess the procedures for what elements are best done in a central conversion center and what are best done on-site.
- 6) Develop procedures that assist various agency staff with establishing an electronic record archival migration process. This will include preliminary conclusions regarding:
 - a) Methods to track versions of archived materials,
 - b) How to assess what to migrate and what to attend to when migrating to assure the integrity of the record's content and any necessary presentation requirements,
 - c) How to identify and appraise records of unknown type
- 7) Develop reference and training materials to disseminate standards, orient administrators and agency staff, and guide implementing records management processes.
- 8) Develop the use of secure electronic methods to:
 - a) Establish and assure record integrity through the record life-cycle
 - b) Electronically sign electronic documents
- 9) Integrate into ongoing agency business practices.

Proposed grant team, sponsors and participation by member organizations

The sponsoring agencies will be the Department of Library, Archives and Public Records and the Government Information Technology Agency.

The project management team will be Russ Savage, Project Lead (GITA/SoS) with assistance from Mike Totherow (SoS), Richard Pearce-Moses (DLAPR), David Hooper (DLAPR), Maureen Haggerty (AOC) and Jeremy Rowe (ASU).

Fiscal management of the project will be provided by the Department of Library, Archives and Public Records.

In-kind matches and agency contributions:

Main time and materials support will be provided by the Secretary of State and the Administrative Office of the Courts while all other organizations will provide data collection, analysis and writing assistance. Specific in-kind matches and contributions will be outlined in the final proposal.

Project deliverables:

The project will establish and test an open-standards based mechanism for storing and indexing disparate electronic records. Establishing and testing this mechanism will lead to defining methods to standardize various forms of electronic records into a common format. This will lead to assessing the best practices for migrating and archiving these electronic records. The published material will include staff training aids to 1) assess various forms of records, 2) develop and

maintain an electronic record archival process and repository. We will develop a model that will aid a diverse range of agencies successfully archive electronic records over time. This approach will deliver working knowledge and tools as well as published material incorporating the best practices gleaned from the project.

We appreciate this opportunity to present this initial overview of the working group's proposed project. We seek your comments and suggestions as we plan and develop the final project proposal for submission. We look forward to working with NHPRC to plan, implement and evaluate a model to address the issues involved in viably archiving electronic records.

Russ Savage, Project Lead, Secretary of State & Government Information Technology Agency

David Hooper, Director, Division of History and Archives, Department of Library, Archives and Public Records

GladysAnn Wells, Director of Department of Library, Archives and Public Records

John Kelly, Director of Government Information Technology Agency

Betsey Bayless, Secretary of State